

**MINUTES
CITY OF AMES
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**

Date: August 19, 2009	Norman Cloud	2010
	Keith Barnes, Chairperson	2010
Call to Order: 7:00 p.m.	Kori Heuss, Vice-Chairperson	2011
	Jeff Johnson	2011
Place: Ames City Hall	*Justin Platts	2012
Council Chambers	* Chuck Jons	2012
	Elizabeth Beck	2012
Adjournment: 8:10 p.m.		
	*Absent	

MAJOR TOPICS DISCUSSED:

1. Review Action Steps for the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan
2. Update on City Council Review of Solar and Wind Energy Systems

CALL TO ORDER: Keith Barnes, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

MOTION: (HEUSS/BECK) to approve the Agenda for the meeting of August 19, 2009.

MOTION PASSED: 5-0

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AUGUST 5, 2009:

MOTION: (CLOUD/HEUSS) to approve the Minutes of the meeting of August 5, 2009.

MOTION PASSED: 5-0

PUBLIC FORUM: There were no public comments.

Review Action Steps for the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan

Ray Anderson, planner, reminded the Commission that on March 4, the Planning and Zoning Commission held a joint meeting with the Historic Preservation Commission to review the goals and objectives for the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan. Following that meeting, changes were made to the goals and objectives that were consistent with the comments from both Commissions and the public. On April 13, the Historic Preservation Commission made its formal recommendation to the City Council to accept the proposed goals and objectives. The City Council then accepted the goals and objectives at its meeting on May 12.

Mr. Anderson explained that the next step is to refine the goals and objectives into something that we call action steps, which are the statements that really give more specificity about how to implement the goals and objectives of the Plan. He said tonight staff is asking the Commission to review the action steps and forward its recommendation to the City Council. He said Will Page, the consultant for the preparation of the Plan, is present tonight to speak to the Commission about the action steps. He said following acceptance of the action steps, Mr. Page

will then complete the Plan and bring it back to the Commission in early October for review and recommendation.

Mr. Anderson then introduced Sharon Wirth, Historic Preservation Commission member, who is also a member of the steering committee that has been working with Mr. Page in the creation of the Plan.

Will Page, 520 East Sheridan Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa, consultant, thanked the steering committee for the time they put in preparing this Plan. He pointed out that this process is sponsored and financed in part by the City of Ames and in part by the State Historical Society of Iowa; a grant of which will terminate on October 31. He explained that the City Council and the City Manager are expecting this Plan to be a policy plan. Mr. Page then gave a timeline of the remaining review and approval process for the Plan.

Elizabeth Beck asked Mr. Page to explain the action step in Goal #2 - Objective B, as it is not clear to her the meaning of “residential improvements to contributing resources within designated historic districts and landmarks.”

Mr. Page explained that this has to do with designated historic districts and landmarks. He gave the example of the buildings in the existing Old Town Historic District. Some of the buildings are contributing, which means they are historic and have historic integrity intact. Some of the buildings are non-contributing (not historic) because they could have been built in 1965. What this language means is that those buildings that are contributing would be eligible for tax abatement, while those buildings that are non-contributing would not.

Keith Barnes asked if the Historic Preservation Commission can give property tax abatement.

Mr. Page said the verbs used in the language are vague and do not identify the perpetrator of the action. In this sense, the words “provide property tax abatement” would mean that the City Council would be the agent to do that. On the other hand, there might be property owners who own a contributing resource in a historic district that would like to have property tax abatement as a possibility. In that instance, the word “provide” gives them the stimulus to lobby for that.

Norman Cloud said this Plan clearly has goals and objectives and action steps to do it. He asked if the Historic Preservation Commission will be the one that is driving to complete those action steps, or will this Plan be handed to the City Council where it is divided among City resources? How will these action steps actually be accomplished after it is approved?

Mr. Page said he would expect the Historic Preservation Commission to take the lead on many of these; however, there are some goals that would be primarily a City Council function. He said the agent has not been identified in these action steps, and the language is intentionally left vague.

Mr. Anderson mentioned the action step the Historic Preservation Commission added to Goal 4 – Objective A at its meeting on August 17:

“Identify and designate appropriate public access site or sites for preservation information.”

Mr. Anderson explained that the Commission thought the first action step didn’t clearly articulate that there would be locations for this public access for preservation information, which could be a building, the Ames Historical Society, City Hall, or a website. He said the Commission wanted this action step added so that we don’t lose track of the fact that we need to identify where

people can go to get the information that they want, and that those places need to be determined.

Kori Heuss said she thinks this is really good work and a good start; however, one thing that strikes her is the intentional vagueness of the language. She said she understands the frame of reference and the conversation that went into creating that language, but is concerned for those people coming on the Commission five years from now.

Mr. Page said the complete plan will have a discussion about the fleshing out of these imperative statements, which will put these action steps into more context.

Mr. Cloud said it is not clear to him if the Plan would identify the historic neighborhoods in Ames, or if the Plan is actually a template for how one would go out and survey to find those neighborhoods.

Mr. Page said it would be both. He said he cannot be prescriptive about what is in Ames in terms of historic resources, because every year historic becomes one year older. He explained that the list of potential historic districts are suggestions in terms of an action step, but there is also an objective to continue surveying, which is something that the City has already committed itself to when it became a Certified Local Government through the State Historical Society of Iowa.

Ms. Beck asked if Mr. Cloud's question is whether there will be a full-blown Plan by the end October?

Mr. Cloud said yes.

Ray Anderson explained that tonight the Commission is reviewing the action steps, which is one component of the Plan the Commission will see in October. He stated that the Historic Preservation Plan has goals and objections and action steps, just like the Land Use Policy Plan. What the Commission will see the first part of October will be the equivalent of a Land Use Policy Plan, only directed towards historic preservation. He said it won't be the implementation of all of these action steps, but it will be the other components of the Plan, just like what the Land Use Policy Plan has.

Mr. Barnes asked Mr. Page if there is a point in time that there should be a pause for the Commission to review the Plan to see if it is meeting the original objective, or see if it needs to be modified.

Mr. Page said any time there is a plan or bylaws of an institution, it is always good to have a regular review of how the institution is formed. He said one of the action steps is for an annual joint meeting of the Ames Historic Preservation Commission and the Ames Planning and Zoning Commission, which will be an opportunity to review where you are as a city in historic preservation. This will also be a time to look at the Plan and maybe choose a few more objectives or action steps to consider, as well as review what has been accomplished in the last year.

Ms. Heuss asked for clarification on the third action step under Goal 1 - Objective A, pertaining to the development of design guidelines for the installation and use of historic streetlights in national or local historic districts. She asked if this action step is in here because streetlights have recently been a popular topic of discussion because of some improvements made in the

downtown area. She then questioned if we could be missing other important aesthetic elements under this main goal.

Mr. Page said this action step was put in because other communities with stabilized historic districts are looking at the next step in terms of neighborhood improvement. He said the general assembly has enabled designated historic districts to install historic streetlights through several different programs, which some historic districts have actually done. He said streetlights might be one of those amenities Ames might be looking at down the road, which the steering committee didn't have a problem with. He said some historic districts would like to have historic-looking fire hydrants, which is also something Ames could consider down the road.

Discussion occurred again about the timeline and what the final document would include.

Jeff Johnson suggested that the Plan contain some type of preservation preamble statement, or something that puts context into why we care about Ames.

Sharon Wirth, 803 Burnett Avenue, Ames, Iowa, Historic Preservation Commission member, and steering committee member, explained to the Commission that the LUPP has a goal that deals with historic preservation, but that is all the City has ever had; there has never been a plan to help implement that goal, and this Plan will help do that. She stated that Mr. Page has been working on the total document that will have an introduction or a preamble that lays out the ground work. Part of that will be information that we already know as a community; that there are certain neighborhoods that could very easily be historic districts. She explained that we currently have one residential historic district, which is a local district and a national registered district, with many more residential areas that could be districts – both local and/or national. And the Main Street Cultural District is certainly an area that could be a commercial historical district. That kind of information will be pulled together and will be part of this document. She further explained that once this document is approved at the end of October, it will be the City's Plan and the City Council will then have to take some action. They could put it on a shelf and do nothing. Or they might tell the Historic Preservation Commission to go forth and work on this, just like they tell the Planning and Zoning Commission to go forth and work on planning and zoning issues. Some of that work would be done by the Historic Preservation Commission, groups that are listed in the document, and community and individual citizens. It is all of those pieces working together to implement the Plan to see where it goes next.

Mr. Johnson reemphasized the importance of a preservation preamble inserted into the document to support tourism and to identify Ames. He said it will put a little bit of reality around the emphasis of historic preservation within its context, as well as put meat and intent and not just projection into the Plan.

Ms. Beck said one of the things she was struck by is the focus that this group has put on the goals and the objectives. She said this group is committed, caring, and highly invested in whatever they are going to end up with. She suggested that when they come back to see the Planning and Zoning Commission in one year, that they have some benchmarks against some of their action steps. She said this information would help us better understand how historic preservation happens, and how a community-based association group really works towards its goals.

MOTION: (HEUSS/BECK) to accept Alternative #1, which states:

The Planning and Zoning Commission can recommend that the City Council accept the "Action Steps" proposed by the Steering Committee to be included in the proposed Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan.

MOTION PASSED: 5-0

Update on City Council Review of Solar and Wind Energy Systems

Sam Perry, Planner, gave an overview of the outcome of the City Council workshop held the previous evening on solar and wind energy systems. He said the City Council decided to separate the two types of energy systems and move forward with code amendments for solar energy systems. He said the code language for the wind energy system will be brought back at a separate meeting. He explained that the Commission will review an updated draft version of the solar regulations in code format at the September 2 meeting. The Commission will then hold a public hearing and make a recommendation to the City Council on the proposed solar regulations at the meeting scheduled for September 16.

COMMISSION COMMENTS: Mr. Cloud congratulated staff for getting the alternative energy to the City Council.

Mr. Cloud then spoke about reviewing the actions steps for the Historic Preservation Plan. He said there were a lot of questions and comments made about this process, but he thinks we all wanted to understand exactly how this is going to play out.

STAFF COMMENTS: Staff reviewed the tentative agenda for the meeting of September 2, 2009.

Sam Perry mentioned that he found that the City of Waterloo has some regulations on solar location and scale, which is very similar to what we are proposing for Ames. Mr. Perry indicated that he would e-mail this information along to the Commission.

With no further business coming before the Commission, the Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Cindy L. Hollar, Secretary
Department of Planning & Housing

Keith Barnes, Chairperson
Planning & Zoning Commission